

21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES: YOUNGER/OLDER DRIVERS

Teen drivers and senior drivers have more in common than most of us would imagine. These seemingly disparate groups pose traffic safety risks for very different reasons, though both represent the highest number of traffic safety collisions-per-mile-driven than any other age group. The results are dangerous and costly to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists in California and throughout the nation.

On the teen side, the causal factors stem from driving inexperience, carelessness, driving while under the influence, or indulging in other high-risk behaviors like speeding. These risks increase at night, when most teens are involved in collisions, often due to being distracted by transporting friends to parties, clubs or other social engagements.

Older drivers, while experienced, come with their own set of risk factors, often associated with aging: slowed reflexes, impaired vision and depth perception, and mental confusion, which could impair any activity. Senior drivers often swerve into other lanes, drive too slowly to keep up with the flow of traffic or are slow to respond to traffic signals.

The risks associated with these groups are likely to increase on both ends of the spectrum. "Youthquake," a study commissioned by the Office of Traffic Safety and the California Against Driving Under the Influence (CaDUI) coalition, projected a 33.5 percent increase in the 15-19-year-old population from 1997-2007. The number of teens is expected to comprise a larger proportion of the overall driving population each year for the next decade.

On a national level, the 70+ age group grew 2.1 times as fast as the total population from 1988-1998, and this trend is expected to continue through the next decade.

"With more teens and seniors on the road, the risks associated with them and number of collisions are expected to increase proportionally," said Pete Bellin of California Friday Night Live, an OTS grantee. "Special outreach must be done to these audiences and to other drivers to bring these numbers down."

OTS-funded programs such as California Friday Night Live do outreach to young people at the elementary-school-age level to educate them on how to be responsible drivers in the future. Counties receiving the OTS funds tailor their messages to meet the specific needs of youth in their communities.

Legislation has also targeted teen drivers. Several states have adopted graduated licensing legislation, which restricts driving privileges for 16-year-olds during the first year of driving. The graduated licensing law was adopted in California in 1998. California also has a zero-tolerance policy regarding teens and alcohol. A teen stopped with any measurable amount of alcohol in his or her system will lose driving privileges. These laws have been widely supported.

Proposed laws concerning seniors have had mixed results. Driving skills in older adults vary considerably and some legislators and drivers feel it is unfair to assume that at a certain age, driving skills diminish.

"This type of legislation makes many senior drivers feel that they're under attack," said Andre Gatier of the Department of Aging. "Being able to drive gives them independence and many feel it's unfair to penalize them for getting older."

Last year in California, legislation was introduced that, among other things, would require drivers over age 70 to take a road test when renewing their licenses rather than receiving automatic renewal from the Department of Motor Vehicles. The legislation was passed in the Senate, but is currently inactive.

Several studies indicate that people do support legislation targeted to older drivers, such as mandatory vision or annual driving tests in order to maintain driving privileges. In fact, according to an Insurance Research Council survey of 1000 men and women over age 18, many older drivers themselves support these types of proposed legislation. Others support training programs, more left-turn signals at intersections and bigger, easier to read street signs.

"Through creating awareness and working with community-based organizations that embrace these audiences, we can effectively lower the driving risks often associated with these groups," said Teresa Becher, Interim Director of OTS.

For more information on OTS' grant program, visit the OTS web site at www.ots.ca.gov.

TASC UPDATE

A new look, a new name, a new mission for the new millennium. The California Coalition Against DUI (CaDUI) has shifted gears, changing from an organization solely focused on impaired driving to one that embodies all traffic safety issues. The organization's new name is the Traffic Alliance for a Safer California (TASC). In addition to issues centered on driving under the influence, TASC has expanded its focus to include pedestrian safety, seatbelts, child passenger safety, bicycle safety, teen driving and aggressive driving issues.

Why the change from CaDUI to TASC? From 1991-1999, CaDUI served as an organization dedicated to reducing alcohol-involved fatalities and injuries. Since CaDUI's inception, alcohol-involved motor vehicle collisions in California have been reduced considerably - 50 percent in the last 10 years. With CaDUI's reduction goal having been met in early 1999, the board of directors decided to broaden and strengthen the organization's scope to include all aspects of traffic safety in California.

TASC's role for 2000 is to serve as an information-sharing organization and traffic safety resource for its 300+ members. This will be accomplished by setting up an interactive and informative web site and by increasing communication among members via newsletters and email listservers. TASC-supported events include Child Passenger Safety Week. TASC is preparing for its annual meeting to be held in conjunction with the OTS Super Summit in April.

For more information please contact Stefanie Brearly at (916) 418-1500 ext. 228.

director's column

It is fitting that the cover story of this edition of OTS Tracks focus on two groups at apparently different stages of their lives, yet facing many of the same hurdles and challenges when it comes to traffic safety.

It is fitting because my goal as interim director of the Office of Traffic Safety is to help OTS meet its mandate to reduce injuries, fatalities and economic



OTS Interim Director
Teresa Becher

losses resulting from motor vehicles crashes. One way to accomplish that goal is to make sure that OTS and its grantees reach all Californians with life-saving, behavior changing traffic safety messages.

To help us succeed, I urge all traffic safety professionals and advocates to take another look at our traffic safety programs and ask a few simple questions: Are we reaching all of our constituents? Are we speaking effectively with our key audiences? Are we active in the communities in which our audiences live, work and play?

If not, now may be the time to reassess how we in the traffic safety field define the term community, because we can no longer afford to be bound by geographic definitions - especially in a state

as rich in diversity and individuality as California.

To be effective, traffic safety programs must embrace the notion that, in California, communities are often formed by common purpose, shared experiences, cultural familiarity, and sometimes unfortunately, shared risks.

Recognizing this, OTS will be conducting outreach to "under-served, over-represented" entities in traffic safety by broadening and strengthening our relationships with community-based organizations throughout the state.

And I challenge all our grantees to do so as well. If senior drivers are over-represented in traffic safety incidents, then it is incumbent upon us as traffic safety leaders to locate and reach out to the community-based organizations that will enable us to communicate most efficiently and effectively with senior citizens.

This same philosophy of community outreach holds true regardless of the traffic safety challenge we face. Whether we are reaching out to African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, teens, seniors, or children on bicycles, there is an appropriate community-based organization with which to partner.

Please call OTS if you need help in locating and contacting appropriate community-based organizations for your traffic safety program.

and trends

According to a recent survey by the Insurance Research Council (IRC), drivers in America - both young and old - are in favor of increased traffic safety measures, even though their own driving privileges could be compromised. The survey included 1,000 men and women ages 18 and older. Eighty-two percent of those 18-to-24-years old favor enacting zero-tolerance laws, which say that if teenagers are found driving with any alcohol in their blood stream, they lose all driving privileges. Graduated licensing, provisional licenses for drivers under 21, and night driving restrictions are traffic safety initiatives supported by the majority of survey participants. Results also indicated that 77 percent of drivers over the age of 65 agreed with the idea of annual vision and road tests. Those age 70 and over supported concepts including the installation of training programs, more left hand signals, signs that are bigger and easier to read, and mandatory physical exams.

According to the Mothers Against Drunk Driving's (MADD) Rating the States Report Card, in which all states are graded on their efforts to stop drunk driving and underage drinking, state legislation in general was cited as slow to respond to a call for the enactment and enforcement of administrative license revocation, 0.08 percent blood alcohol concentration, and primary enforcement safety belt laws. Though California passed with flying colors, holding the highest possible score of an "A" grade, this year, the nation as a whole received a "C+" grade. Between 1982 and 1996, there was a 30 percent decrease in alcohol-related traffic deaths. Since 1996, the last time MADD issued a report card, there has been only a seven percent decrease in alcohol-related traffic deaths in the United States. The report suggests that the implementation of tougher sanctions for repeat offenders, strong political support for high-visibility enforcement programs, and increased tests of drivers involved in crashes resulting in death or serious injury are necessary mandates that need federal support.

SUPER SUMMIT 2000 INFORMATION BOX

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER!!

LATE REGISTRATION FOR SUPER SUMMIT 2000 APRIL 24-27

WHERE:

Hyatt Regency San Diego Hotel
One Market Place, San Diego, Calif.
Hotel Reservations, Call 800/233-1234
or 619/232-1234
After March 31, Accommodations
Based on Availability at Prevailing
Rate

HOW:

OTS Summit Registration:
Call 800/858-7743 or 916/278-4960
Registration On or After April 1: \$215/per
person
TASC Registration On or After April 1: \$65
Exhibitor Non-Profit Fee: \$250
Exhibitor Fee: \$350

GRANTEES ON THE MOVE

LONG BEACH FAMILY SAFETY INITIATIVE

Two years ago it was revealed that the City of Long Beach's most under-served communities were dramatically over-represented in the areas of child passenger and bicycle injuries. The few programs that did exist to help educate people about proper child safety seat use and bicycle safety could not meet the needs of these communities. As a result, children and families suffered. An informal study conducted at the time revealed that in these low-income, multi-cultural areas: only 52 percent of children requiring child safety seats were restrained in safety seats; only 46 percent of older children were restrained by safety belts; and only three percent of bicycle riders under the age of 15 wore helmets.

That's when the city's Neighborhood Services Bureau, Bureau of Public Health and Long Beach Police Department stepped in.

The three city agencies partnered to create a program to address child passenger safety and bicycle helmet issues in these low-income, under-served communities. That program is the Long Beach Family Safety Initiative (LBFSI).

The OTS-funded LBFSI offers a community-based approach to child passenger and bicycle and pedestrian safety for low-income families in six designated Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (NIS) areas. The program seeks to improve child passenger safety by promoting the proper use of child safety seats and safety belts and to improve youth bicycle safety by promoting the proper use of bicycle helmets and safe riding practices.

LBFSI's multi-faceted approach includes education, outreach and enforcement through working with parents and their children. Monthly classes train parents on the need for and use of child passenger safety seats. Parents are referred to the classes through social service agencies, hospitals and other local service organizations. Free child safety seats are provided to parents completing the class.

"A big obstacle is cost," said Program Director Rosa Medina. "A new car seat can cost anywhere from \$50 to \$180. Many of these families can't afford to buy new safety seats for their children. A lot of them get used seats from re-sale outlets or handed down from relatives or friends."

Class instructors provide guidelines on used child safety seats to

ensure that they are compliant with current laws.



LBFSI Program Coordinator Rosa Medina with community residents following a family safety rodeo

A barrier to traffic safety has been language. The population of these NIS areas is largely non-English speaking. In addition, many of the immigrant residents are unaware of the child safety seat laws. To combat that, translators are available for the mainly Spanish- and Khmer-speaking families. All written materials are available in these languages as well as English.

For bicycle safety, LBFSI conducts family safety rodeos every other month. Upon registering for the rodeo, each child receives a Bicycle Safety Passport to wear around his or her neck. The passport has a list of rodeo activities that gets hole-punched when complete. At the end of the day, children turning in their completed passports receive a free bicycle helmet.

The rodeos provide lessons on bicycle safety skills and simple bicycle repair instruction. Representatives from the local fire department provide licenses to the children that attend, and representatives from the police department set up safety skill courses so the kids can practice their new safety skills. Participants play games like safety bingo and the winners receive door prizes such as bicycle helmets or bicycle repair tools.



Officer Darrin Wedey (middle) of Long Beach Police Department alerts families of the dangers of improper child restraint during the LBFSI monthly class. Also pictured, Program Coordinator Rosa Medina (left) and Community Outreach Worker/Translator Blance Galvez



cont.

Turnout for the classes and the rodeos has been excellent.

"Parents and children have been very enthusiastic about coming to the classes and rodeos," said Medina. "They really appreciate that someone is taking the time to communicate to them lessons that can protect their families."

For further information about the Long Beach Family Safety Initiative, contact Rosa Medina at the Long Beach Neighborhood Services Bureau at 562/570-5079.

HIGHWAY 17 CORRIDOR SAFETY PROJECT



The increased commuter and tourist traffic over the past three years and the proportionate increase in collisions along Highway 17, between Santa Cruz and San Jose and across the Santa Cruz Mountains, caught the

attention of several communities and organizations in recent years. The California Highway Patrol (CHP), California Department of Transportation, local elected officials, regional planning agencies and the communities of Santa Cruz and San Jose each voiced their concern for those who travel this stretch of highway and asked that it be considered as a corridor safety project candidate. The evidence presented was enough for CHP Commissioner Dwight "Spike" Helmick to select Highway 17 as a corridor safety project site in December 1998.

OTS has provided funding to CHP corridor safety projects since 1992. Task forces assigned to the projects work together to assess and identify the factors, including driver behavior and environmental conditions that may contribute to traffic collisions along the corridor. In most cases the task force

travels the corridor together, allowing the participants the opportunity to point out the areas of concern and allowing the task force to experience them first-hand. During the drive, officers from the CHP, engineers from CALTRANS and other task force members identify and discuss the factors that contribute to the collisions: driver behaviors and driving environment. The task force then compiles their recommendations into a safety action plan and implementation begins.

The Highway 17 Task Force, chaired by CHP Santa Cruz Area Commander Captain Dave Stuflick and made up of elected officials; state, regional and local governments; and community-based organizations and businesses, met for the first time in February 1999. After reviewing the number of collisions on Highway 17 in the preceding three years, the primary causes of those collisions, the predominant type of collisions and other relevant statistics, the task force agreed that increased enforcement on the highway would help reduce collisions. They also recommended that the OTS grant-funded overtime be used by both the CHP Santa Cruz and San Jose Area offices and the Scotts Valley Police Department. The self-named Safe on 17 Task Force chose as its logo, "Slow Down, Safety Doesn't Hurt."

After driving the corridor in April 1999, the task force began compiling the Highway 17 Safety Action Plan. It contains more than 50 recommendations in the disciplines of enforcement, public education and awareness, and signing, striping and engineering. The recommendations are currently being evaluated and implemented. The primary goal of the project is to reduce fatal and injury collisions on Highway 17 by 10 percent in 1999. Since enhanced enforcement began last April, year-to-date fatal and injury collisions are 25 percent below the average for the same months in the previous three years.

One of the more innovative recommendations was to open a "Safety Corridor Center" at the summit of the

highway. The Center, a small A-frame building, provides a place where the public can get information or report problems. A SAFE call box has been installed in front of the building to give motorists access to the CHP dispatch personnel when the building is closed. The building also provides CHP officers and CALTRANS employees a place to write reports and complete paperwork pertaining to the corridor safety project while on-site.

Public response to the project has been positive. Legislative representatives report a significant drop in the number of complaints they receive about Highway 17 from constituents. In addition, the increased enforcement on the corridor has been recognized on an Internet web page that lists areas of high enforcement activity.

"The feel on Highway 17 is certainly different now than it was at the beginning of the project," said John Lisher, a Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce representative on the Task Force. "Now I'm not intimidated when I drive the speed limit."

For more information on the Highway 17 Safety Corridor Project, please contact Ms. Alice Huffaker at the CHP Office of Special Projects at

OTS WINS WITH GIVING

The California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) was a standout among state agencies in giving to the United California State Employee's Campaign (UCSEC). The UCSEC, through the United Way, provides a single charitable fund raising drive in the State community.

Interim Director Teresa Becher chaired the Business & Commerce Division, of which OTS is a part. This division generated the most contributions for the campaign, more than \$600,000. The New Motor Vehicle Board, a department within the Business & Commerce Division, won a 100 percent participation award. More impressively, OTS won the highest-per-capita giving, the amount of giving per employee statewide. OTS will also receive the coveted "Red Shoe" award for an increase in contributions of more than 200 percent in one campaign year.

Congratulations to OTS employees for their generous spirits!

Landmarks in Legislation



The following measures are currently being tracked by the California Office of Traffic Safety Legislative Unit.

SENATE BILL (SB) 322, Senator Leslie (R-Tahoe City 916/445-5788) - Driving under the influence - Increases the penalties associated with the offense of a minor operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 percent or more by weight from an infraction to a misdemeanor.

SB 567, Senator Speier (D-Hillsborough 916/445-0503) - Vehicles: child passenger restraint system: seatbelts - Requires any parent or legal guardian to secure the child or ward who is less than seven years of age in a child passenger restraint system. In addition,

the bill would increase the fines for violating this provision.

SB 1080, Senator Karmette (D-Long Beach 916/445-6447) - Transportation: California Competes Task Force - This bill would establish in the state government a California Competes Task Force for the purpose of enhancing the state's ability to compete successfully for federal discretionary transportation program funds apportioned to the state under a specified provision of federal law. The bill also prescribes the duties and membership of the task force and requires the Department of Transportation to provide technical and staff support to the task force.

ASSEMBLY BILL (AB) 803, Assembly Member Torlakson (D-Antioch 916/319-2011) - Vehicles: DUI under 21

years of age - Requires a court, upon finding a minor guilty of a first violation of operating a motor vehicle with a BAC of 0.05 percent or more, by weight, to order the person to complete, at a minimum, the educational component of an alcohol and other drug and counseling program that is licensed.

AB 962, Assembly Member Brewer (R-Newport Beach 916/319-2070) - Vehicles: driver's licenses: driving instruction: minors - Specifies that the completion of a correspondence course, training, or instruction in driving instruction, that is offered under the personal supervision and instruction of a teacher as part of a program of independent study in a public or private secondary school providing a program as specified in the Education Code meets the requirements set forth in the

California Vehicle code for Provisional Licensing, as it relates to driving instruction.

AB 1191, Assembly Member Shelley (D-San Francisco 916/319-2012) - Stop sign: increased fine - Authorizes a city or county, by ordinance, to make the punishment a \$100 fine for a violation of failure to properly stop at a stop sign that occurs within the jurisdiction of the city or county.

CAL NETS UPDATE

Now available for viewing is the "Shockwave Safety Belt Demo," developed by the California Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (CAL NETS). Accompanied by a voiceover describing in graphic detail what happens to the human body when not wearing a safety built during a vehicle collision, the animated video serves as a reminder of the importance of safety belts in preventing injury and saving lives. Inspired by information provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the presentation can be viewed on the Office of Traffic Safety web site, at www.ots.ca.gov.

In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of workplace traffic safety programs, CAL NETS is providing Train

the Trainers Workshops, which are given to professionals in the fields of driver training, fleet management and workplace safety. New programs are being developed for novice and high-risk drivers.

Later this year, CAL NETS will provide the opportunity to promote traffic safety at the workplace and beyond through its Drive Safely Work Week campaign. This campaign, usually held in April, will be observed in September this year. More details will be provided in the next issue of OTS Tracks.

CAL NETS is a unique traffic safety program whose mission is to work with employers to save lives and money. For further information about CAL NETS training sessions, contact Dr. Sheila Sarkar at 619/594 0164.



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Teresa Becher, Interim Director
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<http://www.ots.ca.gov>

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OTS

CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY

WHAT'S
AHEAD

April

National Alcohol Awareness Month

Contact: National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, 212/206-6770

April 24

Traffic Alliance for a Safer California Annual Meeting

Hyatt Regency San Diego Hotel, San Diego, Calif.

Contact: 800/858-7743

April 24-27

OTS Traffic Safety Summit

Hyatt Regency San Diego Hotel, San Diego, Calif.

Contact: 916/278-6633

May

Bicycle Safety Month

Contact: Pat Hines, 818/908-5341

May 22-29

Buckle Up America Week

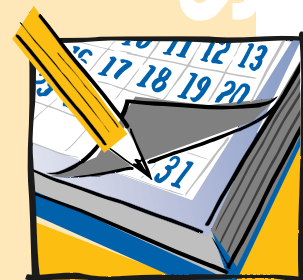
Contact: 202/366-9550

May 22-29

Air Bag and Seat Belt Safety Campaign ABC Mobilization

Events held nationwide

Contact: Karen Gruebnaue, 202/6252570



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